

# Planning Commission Annual Report

## City of Alexandria, Virginia

### Special points of interest:

- Regulatory Cases
- Highlighted Projects
- Work Sessions
- Membership

## FY 2014 Annual Report

### Summary of Activities

The following regulatory cases were considered by the Planning Commission in FY2014. With the exception of one Special Use Permit case, for which the Planning Commission recommended denial, all cases were either recommended for approval or approved, many with important changes recommended or approved.

FY 2014 Regulatory Cases	
Special Use Permits (SUP)	49
Encroachments, Subdivisions and Vacations	11
Development Projects (DSP/DSUP)	20
Master Plan Amendments and Rezoning	13
Text Amendments	13
CDD Conceptual Design Plans	1
City Charter Section 9.06	4
Transportation Management Plans	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>

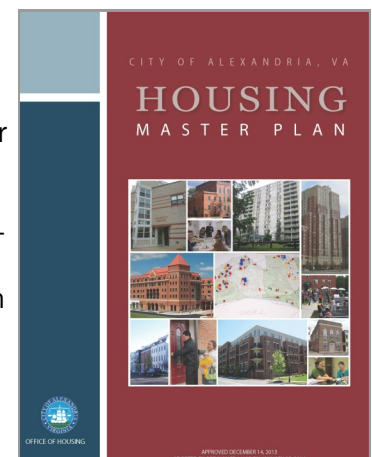
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### Long Range Planning Projects

#### Housing Master Plan

In December 2013 the Commission recommended approval with amendments, on a vote of 6-0, of the *Housing Master Plan* as a new chapter of the Master Plan. The plan guides future affordable housing efforts in order to achieve a wider distribution and range of affordable housing options throughout Alexandria. Amendments recommended by the Commission were incorporated into the Housing Master Plan adopted by the City Council.





### Waterfront Landscape Design and Flood Mitigation Plan

In April 2014 the Planning Commission held a work session on the *Waterfront Landscape Design and Flood Mitigation Plan*. This Implementation Plan of the 2012 Waterfront Plan fulfills many of the goals of the Waterfront Plan including the creation of a continuous waterfront walkway, the creation of a gathering place at the foot of King Street, and the mitigation of nuisance flooding. In June 2014, the Commission held a public hearing and recommended approval (7-0) of the Waterfront Landscape Design and Flood Mitigation Plan. This action recommended approval of a 15-30% Schematic Design (Phase 1 Schematic Design) for the Waterfront and affirmed that staff should proceed with Phase II for completion of design and construction documents.

### Other Special Projects

The Commission recommended approval of the *Alexandria Playspace Policy* in October 2013 by a vote of 7-0. This policy provides a method to systematically consider the need for additional quality play opportunities and a vision for thinking about how to encourage play outside of the normal "playground" structures.

In March 2014, the Commission received and discussed the *Draft Citywide Parks Improvement Plan*, a plan covering the seven city parks that are over 15 acres.

The Commission also received a briefing on the City's *Handbook and Principles for Civic Engagement - What's Next Alexandria*, during the September 2013 meeting. *What's Next Alexandria* was adopted by the City Council in January 2014.

As required by Section 6.14 of the City Charter, the Planning Commission reviewed the *Capital Improvement Program* in April 2014 and found it to be consistent with the Master Plan by a vote of 7-0.

## Zoning Text Amendments

The Commission initiated and recommended for approval a number of proposed amendments to the City's zoning ordinance during FY 2014:

- ♦ *In October*, the Planning Commission initiated and recommended for approval a text amendment clarifying the eligibility of residents in certain infill development projects to obtain parking permits for their visitors. That same month, the Planning Commission initiated and recommended for approval a text amendment to allow schools and social services uses in the few mixed use zones where they were not permitted.
- ♦ *In December*, the Commission recommended approval of text amendments to implement recommendations of the Housing Master Plan including an amendment to Section 7-700 regarding *bonus density in exchange for affordable housing*, and an amendment to allow *significant renovation of affordable housing projects without triggering the standard parking requirement*. The previous September, the Planning Commission had approved technical parking reductions for three affordable housing projects undergoing renovation. The parking reductions were technically required even though parking is adequate on all three sites and no actual reduction in parking was proposed.

### *Zoning Text Amendments continued*

- ◆ *Also in December*, the Planning Commission deferred consideration of amendments to the ordinance regarding *Transportation Management Plans* at the request of the public, who wished to have more time to consider the staff report. The Planning Commission resumed consideration of the text amendment in February and recommended approval after generally positive testimony at the public hearing.
- ◆ *Also in February*, the Planning Commission recommended for approval a text amendment to Article XIII of the Zoning Ordinance to establish new regulations regarding management of *stormwater quantity and quality*.
- ◆ The Planning Commission recommended for approval a text amendment to allow *access ways for town-house developments* to be included as part of the lot for purposes of floor area calculation under certain circumstances. The purpose of the text amendment was to remove regulatory barriers to rear-loaded town-houses. A focus of the Planning Commission's discussion was whether the Planning Commission would have the authority to require adequate and usable open space and adequate spacing of units.

## Small Business Zoning

The Commission reviewed Special Use Permits for several new businesses. It approved the *Blackwall Hitch Restaurant* to take over the long-vacant former Torpedo Factory Food Court building at 5 Cameron Street. As a result, the building is now undergoing renovations for this high-quality restaurant, which is to have up to 450 seats.

The Commission also approved two new restaurant proposals in the Braddock Metro area including a new and expanded *Bastille Restaurant* to occupy part of the mixed use Asher Building at 620 N. Fayette Street and, *Lost Dog*

*Café*, casual eatery specializing in gourmet pizza and craft beer in mixed-use Belle Pre Building at 800 N. Henry Street. These restaurants represent a positive shift of the Braddock Metro Station Area, in accordance with its Small Area Plan, into a lively, active mixed-use neighborhood.



The Lost Dog Café proposal triggered a discussion of *off-premises alcohol regulations*. The Planning Commission requested that staff return in FY 2015 prepared to lead the Planning Commission in a deeper discussion of that topic, with the possible outcome a new standard condition related to off-premises alcohol.

There was also an unusual pair of cases where the Commission reviewed existing, but expiring, Special Use Permits for two inappropriately located *used car dealerships* in the heart of Old Town on King Street. After extensive review, the Commission voted to not renew these Special Use Permits because it is important to ensure that these sites could be put to more appropriate uses through redevelopment. An important factor in the Planning Commission's decision was the fact that the 2005 King Street Retail Study, which was prepared with considerable public involvement, based on expert analysis, and approved by both the Planning Commission and City Council, recommended that the SUPs for the car dealerships not be renewed when they expired. The Commission also noted that the dealerships had been given many years' notice to find new locations.

### *Small Business Zoning continued*

Also along King Street, the Commission approved a small sidewalk encroachment to facilitate the replacement of a highly inappropriate awning and sunshade combination that existed at [Landini's Restaurant](#) (115 King St) with a more suitable, and vastly more attractive awning to shade its outdoor dining area.

King Street SUP cases, as well as an SUP for an electronic sign at Douglas MacArthur Elementary School, prompted a request by the Planning Commission to take up [King Street A-frame signs](#) and [electronic signs](#) in FY 2015.

During FY 2014, the Planning Commission considered several special use permit cases involving auto repair or other auto-oriented uses wishing to move into buildings on parcels slated for redevelopment. The Commission directed staff to develop language for a standard condition for uses on redevelopment sites to include a coordinated expiration date that would balance the needs of the tenant with the ultimate goal of redevelopment. This standard language was used on all similar SUPs during the year.

## Development Projects

The Commission approved a number of notable development projects in FY2014. The first significant project to implement the Waterfront Plan, [The Cummings Hotel](#), was approved in January 2014. This boutique-style hotel will be constructed at Union and Duke Streets and provide important visitor accommodations, a fine restaurant and a public courtyard to attract tourists and residents to Alexandria's expanded waterfront. The Planning Commission's strong advocacy for quality architecture during the hearing for this project was very important in this landmark approval process.



The approvals of the [Seminary Overlook](#) (June 2014) and [Cameron Park](#) (May 2014) projects by the Commission continue the transformation of the City's west end. The Seminary Overlook project located near the highway interchange of 395 and Seminary Road is the first project approved to implement the City's Beauregard Small Area Plan. Eight existing, garden-style apartment buildings will be replaced with four, new contemporary-style apartment buildings. The existing Kenmore Avenue will be realigned, a new neighborhood park will be created, and developer contributions totaling \$10 million will provide important infrastructure improvements and additional affordable housing opportunities in the Beauregard area.





### *Development Projects continued*

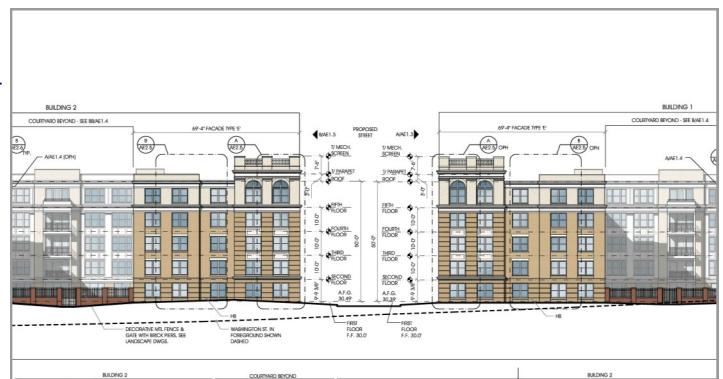
Cameron Park will transform the corner of Pickett Street and Cameron Station Boulevard into a vibrant urban-style center with a mix of retail, apartments and townhouses that further define a new character for the west end.

Two other key redevelopment projects were also approved by the Commission in FY2014.



The *Health Department Redevelopment* (February 2014) project approved near the intersection of N. St Asaph and Oronoco Streets will adaptively reuse the City's former Health Department property as new townhomes while retaining the historic character of this facility for future generations. The project also will convert a City-owned parking lot on the same block, at N. Pitt and Oronoco Streets, into a second townhouse string.

In addition, the successful approval of the revised *Hunting Terrace* (April 2014) project on South Washington Street with two, new apartment buildings and open space features designed to complement the character along South Washington Street will enhance the Parkway's southern gateway into Old Town Alexandria.



This fiscal year saw the approval of a number of infill development projects. These were primarily new townhouse developments within or near the City's historic districts, including *923 King* (September 2013), as well as *Wilkes Townhouses*, *S. Patrick Street Townhouses* and *1505 Powhatan* (June 2014). While generally smaller in scale than projects elsewhere in the City, these townhouse developments required a great deal of communication between the community, staff, and the BAR. The Planning Commission's attention to detail on issues including parking and streetscape improvements helped to ensure the projects would fit into the existing neighborhoods. They also demonstrated the ongoing level of cooperation with members of the BAR, recognizing the Board's expertise on architecture within the Districts.

Other notable infill developments included *Slater's Lane Residences* (December 2014), the former Nordic Press site, where the Planning Commission recommended approval of a small, 33-unit residential building with two on-site affordable housing units, roof top amenity space and underground parking. There were several infill, mixed-use projects: the redevelopment of the *Travelodge on N. Washington Street* (October 2013), redevelopment of *Tony's Corner on Route 1* (October 2013), and redevelopment of a *vacant parcel at Route 1 and E. Howell* as a commercial building (September 2013).

## Work Sessions

The Planning Commission held work sessions to discuss the following topics:

September 3, 2013	Long Range Educational Facilities Plan
October 1, 2013	Changes to Section 11-808 of the Zoning Ordinance related to protest petitions
April 1, 2014	Waterfront landscape and flood mitigation design plan
May 6, 2014	Update on the Royal St. Bus Garage Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee process
June 3, 2014	Update on the Potomac Yard Metrorail project

## Membership

John Komoroske ended his 24+ years of service on the Planning Commission in February 2014. David Brown was appointed to the Commission by City Council in February and began serving his term in March. Also in March, the Commission held elections for officers of chairman and vice chairman. Eric Wagner was elected chairman and Stewart Dunn was reelected as vice chairman for one year. All members attended at least 75% of the scheduled meetings. The attendance record follows:

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS MEETINGS ATTENDANCE REPORT JULY 1, 2013 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2014												
COMMISSION:		Planning Commission										
CHAIRPERSON:		John Komoroske (July 2013 to February 2014) – Eric R. Wagner (Starting March 2014)										
NAME	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
John Komoroske	E	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Stewart Dunn	X	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Maria Wasowski	X	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nathan Macek	X	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mary Lyman	X	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Derek Hyra	X	N/A	X	X	X	E	X	X	X	X	X	X
Eric R. Wagner	E	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
David Brown	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	X	X	X	X

INDICATE: (X) PRESENT; (E) EXCUSED, (U) UNEXCUSED

LIST OF THOSE WHO DID NOT ATTEND 75% OF MEETINGS: **None**

*Continued page 7*

*Membership continued***Planning Commission Membership on Other Groups**

Other Board or Commission	Planning Commission Members
Transportation Commission	Nathan Macek (chair), Maria Wasowski
Waterfront Commission	H. Stewart Dunn
Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Group	Eric R. Wagner
ARHA Redevelopment Work Group	Derek Hyra
Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Group	David Brown
Eisenhower West Steering Committee	Derek Hyra (chair)
Oakville Triangle/Route 1 Advisory Group	Maria Wasowski
Parking Task Force for New Development	Nathan Macek
Developer Housing Contribution Work Group*	Mary Lyman

\*This group concluded their work in FY2014

## Other Planning Commission Information

The Planning Commission is appointed by City Council and performs its duties under Chapter 9 of the City Charter, Section 6.14 of the City Charter, and applicable portions of Sections 15.2-2223 and 2225 of the Virginia Code as implemented through various sections of the Zoning Ordinance and City Code. It is charged with adopting, reviewing and amending the City's master plan and making recommendations to City Council for final approval. It is also charged with making final decisions on subdivision and site plan cases, and making recommendations to Council on map amendments, text amendments, special use permits, development special use permits, encroachments and vacation proposals.

The Commission's choice of leadership is covered in its bylaws and involves the election of officers on an annual basis in March; elections this year are described in the summary of activities. As called for in the by laws, it is the vote of the Commission that determines the turnover in leadership.

*Questions?* Please contact Planning and Zoning staff at 703.746.4666 or email the Planning Commission at

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